

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Flotation Technologies

Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Buoyancy Products Company Adds Depth to Knowledge Base

Client Profile:

Flotation Technologies, Inc., is a world leader in the design, manufacture, and marketing of deepwater buoyancy systems using high-strength Flotec syntactic foam and polyurethane elastomer products. The company provides quick turnaround custom engineering and reliable fabrication to the offshore oil, oceanographic, seismic and government markets. Flotation Technologies has been in business since 1979 and employs 28 people at their Biddeford, Maine, facility.

Situation:

Flotation Technologies approached the Maine Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Maine MEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, in search of business methods that would help reduce operating costs and introduce them to best business practices in a effort to make them more competitive in the deep water buoyancy market. Maine MEP project managers identified the company as a good H-1B Technical Skills Training program candidate and reviewed the logistics/expectations of a strategic assessment. After the assessment process was explained to Flotation Technologies' president, Tim Cook, he felt that the company would benefit from it. Buy in from Flotation's management team was achieved with the help of the Maine MEP project managers.

Solution:

Maine MEP project managers reviewed objectives and customized outcomes for the 3-day enterprise-wide technical and strategic assessment process. Patrick Martin of Maine MEP led the assessment team made up of Mike Clark and Bob Doiron, also of Maine MEP, and Wayne Sula of Massachusetts MEP. Bob Doiron drafted the final report which was delivered in 3 weeks, first to the president and then to the management team. Three key assessment outcomes identified by the president were: learning how to embrace lean manufacturing, identifying the need for a strategic business plan, and identifying the need for a workforce development plan. Energized by the assessment, the management team immediately engaged in the following training events: Lean 101, Lean 201-VSM and Lean 202-Kaizen. An internal lean champion was identified and a plan established to perform kaizen events on a periodic basis in the facility. The assessment also led to a workforce development plan that identified specific training for key individuals in the company in functional areas such as sales, marketing, engineering, operations and strategic planning.

Results:

- * Targeted for over \$80,000 of direct and match workforce investment funding from two key U.S. Dept of Labor training programs executed by the Maine MEP.
- * Workforce development and training in areas of operations, sales and marketing, engineering, and strategic planning best practices, as well as Time Wise Solutions for Lean Manufacturing techniques, will take place over next 9 months.

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- * Strategic planning involving supply chain best practices combined with a comprehensive workforce development plan positions the company to withstand off shore competition on and off U.S. soil.
- * Reduced time for engineering to sales processing cycle by 30 percent.
- * Improved response to customer needs.

Testimonial:

"Everyone was very pleasant, professional, and down to earth. It was a more practical approach to business consulting. Maine MEP helped me achieve critical mass in our lean transformation within Flotation Technologies, and they remain available to assist us in our sustaining efforts."

Tim Cook, President